

## ***New Energy Secretary supports PMA roles, mission, Federal status***

**O**n Jan. 20, former Senator Spencer Abraham was sworn in as the nation's 10th Energy Secretary.

During his Senate confirmation hearing, he answered many tough questions, and through his answers, championed the need for a balanced, comprehensive Federal energy policy. What would this policy entail, and what would the role of Federal power marketing administrations be?

In his opening remarks before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Abraham said he was "deeply committed to developing an energy policy that includes increasing domestic production of energy in an environmentally responsible manner, increasing our use of renewable energy, decreasing our reliance on imported oil and developing new technologies that conserve fossil fuels and reduce energy-related pollution."

Would he advocate drilling for oil on Federal lands, the use of clean coal and cleaner coal-burning technologies, nuclear power, tax incentives for renewables or national reliability standards? Yes, to all these.

How about removing dams or selling the PMAs? An emphatic, "No." In response to a question from Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR), Abraham agreed it would be irresponsible to remove dams supplying hydropower with the energy concerns facing California and the Pacific Northwest.

As for privatizing the PMAs? "I supported legislation that would have shifted the various important and vital functions of the Department of Energy to other departments and agencies or the private sector." But noting that many factors had changed in the electric power industry, he assured the committee that "... I no longer support this legislation and its various components, such as privatization of the Federal power marketing administrations."

Pressing the issue, Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) asked specifically if Abraham would oppose others wishing to sell the PMAs. Abraham confirmed he would fight against privatizing efforts. In response to a question from Senator Jeff Bigaman (D-NM), he further stated he would not attempt to change the way the PMAs develop rates, nor would he alter the operations or structure of PMAs.

In Abraham's view, the nation's continued prosperity depends on adequate supplies of reasonably priced energy. He sees a need for a balanced and comprehensive energy policy. The new Energy Secretary clearly went on record that Western and our sister PMAs would continue to play important roles in meeting the nation's growing energy needs. ■



*Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham takes the oath of office as his family looks on.*